

Practice-Building Tips

Working in Medical and Wellness Settings

Acceptance by the conventional medical community of massage as an integrated part of healthcare, and recognition by companies and health centers of the value of promoting wellness are creating opportunities for massage therapists to build or expand their practices into these areas. You may find new opportunities if you would like to work in a medical environment, and you may find a welcoming work setting in a wellness program.



We're with you all the way.

This Tip Sheet addresses two areas in which AMTA members have expressed an interest in learning more – working with medical professionals and working in a wellness setting. One is geared toward working with people who have injuries or diseases, while the other concerns itself with prevention.

Working with Medical Professionals

The results of a recent survey, conducted between November 2000 and February 2001 in Washington State, indicate strong recognition on the part of medical clinicians that massage therapy is effective. In Washington, where complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) providers have been recognized by health plans since 1996, the survey asked medical practitioners five years later what they thought of CAM practices. Of 12 CAM practices included in the survey, massage therapy was ranked highest (74%) in terms of being perceived as always or usually effective. The next closest CAM practice in the same category of effectiveness was acupuncture, ranked by 67.7% of clinician respondents.¹

These results are consistent with findings that, when naming the types of alternative care consumers say they would be most likely to use, 80% say massage therapy.² The American Medical Association published a report in September 2000 that said two-thirds of the nation's medical schools teach

about herbal therapy, acupuncture, massage or other alternative medicine.²

You might be able to expand your working relationship with the medical community in the following ways:

- on-site by appointment or by contracted hours
- accept referrals to your practice

Each can be negotiated as an employee or as a contractor.

Marketing Steps

The following steps can help you learn about this market and approach it with credibility and confidence.

1. Identify Your Market

Identify types and locations of medical establishments in your community. These may include such places and practices as:

- physician family practice
- hospitals
- medical clinics
- rehabilitation centers
- physical therapy clinics
- nursing homes
- addiction counseling centers
- hospices
- psychiatrists
- rheumatologists
- sports medicine clinics
- orthopedic physicians
- osteopathic practices
- chiropractic practices
- gynecologists

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2. Narrow Your Scope

If there is a particular type of medical practice to which you are attracted, learn about its purpose, its operation, and the types of patients or clients it helps.

3. Start Your Referral Network

There are numerous ways to make initial contact with medical practitioners from whom you might receive referred clients. (See AMTA's Career Guide, Manual Four, "Marketing Your Practice," for specific suggestions about how to promote your practice.)

4. Expand Your Referral Network

Continue to actively market your services to referral sources that have already sent you clients, as well as to new referral sources.

Tips

Let medical practitioners know that you have attended, or will be attending, a seminar or workshop that will increase your value to them. Invite them to join you at upcoming seminars or workshops that would be of interest to members of the medical profession.

Knowledge is Power

Do your homework before you contact medical professionals. Massage schools that provide specialty training in medical massage are teaching the following subjects:

- Pathophysiology – The study of specific medical conditions. Massage therapists need to understand the appropriate massage techniques for a particular condition and the standard medical treatments used. Knowledge of pathophysiology helps you determine cautions and contraindications for a variety of medical conditions, and to know when to refer a client to another specialist.
- Medical Modalities – Learn about modalities used in medical settings, such as electrotherapy, ultrasound, electrical stimulation, and pharmacology. Learn your state's regulations that govern various modalities.
- Techniques – Some medical conditions, such as burns, require non-touch types of body therapy, such as energy modalities. Learn appropriate techniques for a variety of

medical conditions and diseases.

- Communication Skills and Recordkeeping – Familiarity with medical terminology and recordkeeping specific to different types of medical practice is key to gaining credibility in these settings. Good communication also requires understanding organizational structures and chains of command typical in particular medical settings.

Working in a Wellness Setting

Discover new opportunities for expanding your practice or for employment by looking into the variety of wellness programs that are available in your community.

What are Wellness Settings?

Wellness programs emphasize promoting and maintaining health rather than treating illness or disease. They are based on models that focus attention on mind, body, and spirit, and to the total environment in which a person lives. The emphasis on wellness rather than on disease has been shown to reduce employee absenteeism, reduce the number of sick days and hours lost from work, and reduce overall healthcare costs.

Because of the extensive benefits wellness programs offer, these programs can be found in many environments and are available to many segments of the population. In your own community, you might find wellness centers at any of the following locations:

- colleges and universities
- community-based wellness centers
- company work sites
- state and local government offices
- hospitals
- medical clinics
- retirement communities
- substance abuse centers
- women's health centers

Components of Wellness Programs

Wellness programs differ widely. In addition to massage, they may include any of the following components:

- health evaluation and/or physical examinations
- fitness training and classes
- health club classes
- job counseling
- nutrition counseling
- mental health counseling

- smoking cessation
- stress reduction training
- tai chi and/or yoga
- weight loss clinics
- workplace safety

Cost Benefits of Wellness Programs

A study described in *Wellness Management*, a newsletter of the National Wellness Association, reported the following benefits at more than thirty companies that had studied the effects of wellness programs over a 15-year period³:

- Average days of sick leave reduced by 22%
- Number of hospital admissions reduced by 62%
- Number of physician visits reduced by 16%
- Per capital health costs reduced by 28%
- Injury incidence reduced by 25%
- Per capita workers compensation cost reduced by 47%

Tips from a Practitioner

Marilyn Kier, AMTA Professional member (IL), specializes in providing on-site seated massage to employees in wellness programs at companies like Motorola and Discover Financial Services, and at Harper College. She offers the following tips in how to seek clients in a wellness setting:

1. Get to Know Wellness Professionals/Let Them Get to Know You

- Become active in your local chapter of Wellness Councils of America and national or regional conferences of the Association of Worksite Health Promotion (AWHP).
- Join the local chamber of commerce.
- Give talks to organizations on topics such as ergonomics, relaxation, and different types of massage.
- At a company, the person who handles wellness benefits might be a director of wellness, a director of work and family benefits, or a human resources director.
- At a hospital, first distinguish between wellness programs for patients and wellness programs for employees or staff. There might be a wellness committee for employees, directed by Human Resources. Many

hospitals have or are developing community-based wellness centers for integrated care.

- At a university or college, the staff/faculty wellness program might reside in a Department of Health & Psychological Services, and be headed by a wellness coordinator.

2. Introduce Yourself

- When you have a contact person's name, send them a letter and then follow up with a phone call to request an appointment to talk about how you could help them. In the appointment, give a demonstration of your services.
- Initial questions to ask: Do you have a wellness program? Are you thinking of implementing one? Are you familiar with seated massage?

3. Negotiate a Profitable Working Relationship

- Employee participation is higher if the company's budget pays for employees to receive on-site seated massages, vs. if the employee pays partial costs.
- Suggest the company pay you by the hour rather than by the massage, because you will have transition times between massages that are otherwise unpaid.

4. Conduct Your On-site Business Professionally

- Plan for three 15-minute massages per hour. You need five minutes between massages to sanitize the chair, greet the new client, establish rapport, ask questions about contraindications, and adjust the chair.
- It's important to be efficient without conveying an assembly-line approach.
- Be a role model for self-care. If you work a seven-hour day, that's 21 clients – make sure to take necessary breaks, drink fluids, and use proper biomechanical posture and movements.

5. Find out if companies' health plans include flex benefits, and if employees can use their pre-tax flex benefits for massage therapy and bodywork.

- If so, ask how you can communicate that fact to employees.
- Find out when the flex benefit account is closed out each year, and send a notice to employees two months before to remind them how they can prevent those benefits from going to waste.

AMTA Provides Resources to Help You Expand Your Practice

- AMTA's *Massage Therapy Career Guide* series
Manual Three, "Managing Your Practice,"
pages 42-54 (includes sample letter to healthcare practitioners).
Manual Four, "Marketing Your Practice".
- AMTA Source Catalog www.amtamassage.org/Catalog
Order AMTA brochures .
- AMTA's Massage Information Center
www.amtamassage.org/infocenter/home.html
Updated surveys, articles and research on massage therapy.
- AMTA fact sheet, "Massage Therapy Facts for Physicians" www.amtamassage.org/about/physicians.htm

AMTA fact sheet, "Research Citations on the Efficacy of Massage Therapy"
www.amtamassage.org/infocenter/research.html
*Available for downloading and reproduction.
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- AMTA Job Network, www.amtamassage.org/jobnet/home.htm
Search job openings and post your résumé.
- AMTA School Profiles www.neton-line.com/cgi-bin/amta/schoola.idc
Schools offering medical massage programs.

Wellness Resources

- Association for Worksite Health Promotion
www.awhp.org
- Health Enhancement Research Organization
www.the-hero.org
- National Wellness Institute
www.nationalwellness.org
- Wellness Councils of America www.welcoa.org

Other Resources

- Andrade, C. and Clifford, P. *Outcome-Based Massage*. Lippincott, Williams & Wilkins, 2001.
- Callahan, M. and D. Luther. *The Medical Massage Office Manual, 2nd Edition*. Callahan/Luther Partnership, 1999.
- Field, T. *Touch Therapy*. Harcourt Publishers, Ltd, 2000.
- Fritz, S. *Mosby's Fundamentals of Therapeutic Massage*. Lippincott, Williams & Wilkins, 1999.
- Huerther, S. and McCance, K. *Understanding Pathophysiology*. Harcourt Health Services, 1999.
Werner, R. and Benjamin, B. *A Massage Therapists' Guide to Pathology*. Lippincott, Williams & Wilkins, 1998.
- Health Care Job Store,
www.healthcarejobstore.com
Search job openings, post your résumé, and access salary survey responses.

¹ "Post-Legislative Mandate: Two-Thirds of Group Health Clinician Respondents View CAM as Effective," *The Integrator for the Business of Alternative Medicine*, April 2001.

² AMTA "Demand for Massage Therapy" fact sheet,
www.amtamassage.org/about/demand.htm

³ "Update on the Cost-Effectiveness of Worksite Health Promotion Programs" by Larry S. Chapman, MPH. *Wellness Management*, Winter 1997, Vol. 13, No. 4, pp. 3-5.